

## **NOAA Fisheries Announces Final Initial Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Quotas, Effort Controls and Regulatory Changes for 2003**

In accordance with the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks (HMS FMP), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has filed final initial specifications for the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) fishery to set quotas and General category effort controls for the 2003 fishing year. Based on the 2002 quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), 2002 fishing year underharvests/overharvests to be applied to the 2003 fishing year allocation, and the unused portion of the dead discard allowance, NOAA Fisheries announces the 2003 fishing year quotas shown in the attached table, which also shows the time-period subquotas for the General category. The final rule also revises regulations regarding incidental catch of BFT by pelagic longline vessels and revises several permit requirements.

NOAA Fisheries announces that effective November 3, 2003 persons aboard vessels permitted in the General category are prohibited from fishing, including tag-and-release, for BFT of all sizes for the time period of November 15 through November 30, inclusive.

NOAA Fisheries announces that effective November 3, 2003, General category vessels are allowed to participate in registered recreational HMS tournaments when fishing under tournament rules. When fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing Atlantic tunas while participating in a tournament, General category vessels must comply with the Atlantic tunas General category regulations. When fishing for, retaining, or possessing sharks, swordfish, and/or billfish, General category vessels must comply with recreational regulations. It is incumbent upon the General category vessels owner/operator to verify that a tournament is registered with NOAA Fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries announces that effective November 3, 2003, permit applicants are allowed to make permit category changes within 10-calendar days of the date of issuance of the permit to correct any potential errors.

Effective November 3, 2003, NOAA Fisheries defines "vicinity of the management boundary area" as the Northeast Distant (NED) area to facilitate management, monitoring, and enforcement of the 25 mt allocated to the Longline north category, consistent with the 2002 ICCAT Recommendation. NOAA Fisheries also will allow retention of all BFT caught incidentally to fishing under the NED experimental fishery with no target catch requirements due to the strict controls of the experiment that would prevent fishermen from targeting BFT.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Brad McHale at (978) 281-9260.

Bruce C. Morehead for  
John H. Dunnigan, Director  
Office of Sustainable Fisheries

October 2, 2003  
Date

Attachment

## Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Final Initial Quota Specifications and General Category Effort Controls for the 2003 Fishing Year

Category	2003 ICCAT Recommended Quota	Adjustments to 2003 ICCAT Recommended Quota	Subperiod or Subcategory	Final Initial 2003 FY BFT Quota
General	689.8	-5.4	June – August September Oct– December New York Bight <sup>1</sup>	684.4 404.6 202.4 67.4 10.0
Harpoon	57.1	20.4		77.5
Longline	143.6 <sup>2</sup>	5.2	North South	148.8 <sup>2</sup> 74.8 <sup>2</sup> 74.0
Trap	1.5	2.3		3.8
Purse Seine	272.4	110.0		382.4
Angling	288.6	208.4	School North South School Reserve Lg Sch/Sm Med North South Trophy North South	497.0 230.9 130.0 100.9 22.1 237.4 127.6 109.8 6.6 2.2 4.4
Reserve	36.6	35.5		72.1
Total	1489.6 <sup>2</sup>	371.4		1866.0 <sup>2</sup>

NOTE: These numbers are preliminary and are subject to change.

<sup>1</sup>The New York Bight set-aside will be implemented when it is determined that BFT have migrated to the New York Bight area and when the coast wide General category is closed. The New York Bight set-aside area is the area comprising the waters south and west of a straight line originating at a point on the southern shore of Long Island at 72°27' W (Shinnecock Inlet) and running SSE 150° true, and north of 38°47' N.

<sup>2</sup>Inclusive of 25 mt to account for bycatch of BFT in directed longline fisheries in the vicinity of the management area boundary, per 2002 ICCAT Western BFT Recommendation.